

Water Lines

SDW Hotline Report

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Top Ten Topics

Topic	Questions (phone & e-mail)	Percent of Total* Questions
Tap Water Testing	316**	14
Local Drinking Water Quality	271	12
Household Wells	126	6
Home Water Treatment Units	106	5
Other EPA	106	5
Lead	103	5
Other Background	81	4
Consumer Confidence Reports	75	3
UCMR	75	3
Non-EPA Environmental	68	3

*A total of 2,235 questions were answered by the Hotline (via telephone and email) in January 2003.

**Citizens who obtain their drinking water from private household wells asked 41 percent of the tap water testing questions.

Calls	E-mails	Total***
1,531	289	1,820

***A single call or e-mail may generate multiple questions.

Published Monthly

See past reports at

<http://intranet.epa.gov/ow/hotline>

Safe Drinking Water Hotline: National

Toll-free No.: (800) 426-4791 or

(877) EPAWATER

For More Information Contact:

Harriet Hubbard, EPA Project Officer

(202) 564-4621

Operated by Booz Allen Hamilton

Under Contract #GS-10F-0090J

What's New

New Publications:

- *Radionuclides in Drinking Water: A Small Entity Compliance Guide*, EPA815-R-02-001, is now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/rads/implement.html or by contacting the Safe Drinking Water Hotline.
- *Factoids: Drinking Water and Ground Water Statistics for 2002*, EPA816-K-03-001, is now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/date/getdata.html.
- *Providing Safe Drinking Water in America: 2000 National Public Water Systems Compliance Report*, EPA305-R-02-001, is now available at www.epa.gov/safewater/annual/index.html.

Did You Know?

The United States currently uses an estimated 880,000 miles of distribution system piping to convey potable water.

White Paper; New or Repaired Water Mains;
www.epa.gov/safewater/tcr/pdf/maincontam.pdf

EPA DISCLAIMER

Answers to questions in the Safe Drinking Water Hotline monthly report are intended to be purely informational and are based on SDWA provisions, EPA regulations, guidance, and established policy effective at the time of publication. The answers given reflect EPA staff's best judgment at the time and do not represent a final or official EPA interpretation. This report does not substitute for the applicable provisions of statutes and regulations, guidance, etc., nor is it a regulation itself. Thus, it does not impose legally-binding requirements on EPA, States, or the regulated community. An answer to a question in this report may be revised at any time to reflect EPA's revisions to existing regulations, changes in EPA's approach to interpreting its regulations or statutory authority, or for other reasons. EPA may provide a different answer to a question in this report in the future.

Also, an answer provided in this report may not apply to a particular situation based upon the circumstances. Any decisions regarding a particular case will be made based on the applicable statutes and regulations. Therefore, interested parties are free to raise questions and objections about the appropriateness of the application of an answer in this report to a particular situation, and EPA will consider whether or not the recommendations or interpretations in the answer are accurate and appropriate in that situation. The information in this report is not intended, nor can it be relied upon, to create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the United States.

Calendar:

Who?	What?	Where?	When?	More Information
NDWAC	Small System Affordability Working Group	RESOLVE, Inc. 1235 23 rd St. NW Suite 275 Washington, DC	1/13/2003 – 1/14/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact RESOLVE at (202) 944-2300 • Open to public • Limited seating
AWWA	Source Water Protection Symposium	Albuquerque, NM	1/19/2003 – 1/22/2003	
GWPC	Annual UIC Meeting	New Orleans, LA	1/21/2003 – 1/22/2003	
EPA	Arsenic and Surface Water Treatment Rules Training	Transmitted by satellite broadcasts to designated downlinks locations throughout the nation	1/29/2003 – 1/30/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For downlink locations, registration contacts, or more information: www.epa.gov/safewater/dwa/satellite.html
EPA	Clean Water/Drinking Water Closing the Gap: Innovative Responses for Sustainable Water Infrastructure Forum	Marriott at Metro Center Ballroom 775 12 th St. NW Washington, DC	1/31/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to Public • Contact closingthegap@cadmusgroup.com • For more information: www.epa.gov/water/gap_forum.html
NDWAC	Contaminant Candidate List Classification Process Work Group	RESOLVE, Inc. 1235 23 rd St. NW Suite 275 Washington, DC	2/5/2003 – 2/6/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact RESOLVE at (202) 944-2300
NSF International	Public Water System Compliance Using Point-of-Use and Point-of-Entry Treatment Technologies	Orlando, FL	2/13/2003 – 2/14/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more information: www.nsf.org/cphe/pou
EPA	SDWA Tribal Program Meeting	Las Vegas, NV	2/25/2003 – 2/26/2003	
NSTA	National Science Teachers Convention	Philadelphia, PA	3/23/2003 – 3/26/2003	
NDWAC	Contaminant Candidate List Classification Work Group	Washington, DC	3/27/2003 – 3/28/2003	
NRWA	Rural Water Rally	Washington, DC	4/6/2003 – 4/8/2003	
OW, OSWER, EPA Region 4	2003 EPA Science Forum	Washington, DC	5/5/2003 – 5/7/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For more information: www.epa.gov/ord/scienceforum
National Association State Floodplain Managers	Annual Conference	St. Louis, MO	5/11/2003 – 5/16/2003	
NDWAC	Contaminant Candidate List Classification Work Group	Washington, DC	5/12/2003 – 5/13/2003	
	Source Water Protection Conference	Washington, DC	6/2/2003 – 6/4/2003	
AWWA	Annual Conference	Anaheim, CA	6/15/2003 – 6/19/2003	

Frequently Asked Qs & As

This section provides answers to frequently asked questions not necessarily represented in one of the Top Ten Topic categories.

Q: *The drinking water I receive from a public water system has an unfamiliar odor and a slight discoloration. I am concerned that this is an indication of lead in my drinking water. What can I do to determine if lead is in my drinking water?*

A: To determine if lead is in your drinking water, contact a state certified laboratory to have your drinking water tested for excessive lead concentrations. Testing drinking water is essential in determining whether lead is present because you cannot see, taste, or smell lead in drinking water (40 CFR 141.85(a)(1)(iv)(A)). Contact your state certification officer to get a list of certified laboratories in your state. To find state certification officer contact information, call or e-mail the Safe Drinking Water Hotline or visit the OGWDW Web site at www.epa.gov/safewater/faq/sco.html.

Q: *A public water system (PWS) supplied by a surface water source or a ground water source under the direct influence of surface water must monitor the residual disinfectant level in the distribution system (40 CFR 141.74). At what points in the distribution system must these samples be taken? How often must a PWS take samples?*

A: The residual disinfectant concentration must be measured at least at the same points in the distribution system and at the same time as total coliforms are sampled, as specified in 40 CFR 141.21 (141.74(b)(6)(i), 141.74(c)(3)(i)). Monitoring frequency is based on the population served by the water system. Samples must be collected at regular time intervals throughout the month (141.21). A state may specify alternate sampling points if it determines that those points are more representative of treated (i.e., disinfected) water quality in the distribution system (141.74(b)(6)(i), 141.74(c)(3)(i)).

Q: *States are required to make the results of source water assessments available to the public (SDWA 1453(a)(7)). How does EPA define "public?" Does EPA provide guidance on recommended methods states may use to make these assessments available to the public?*

A: Public is defined as all consumers in a source water protection area as well as all other members of the public, including federal, state, and local government agencies. Public water systems must include

information on the availability of completed source water assessments in their annual consumer confidence reports (141.153(b)(2)). Additional methods for making assessment results available to the public can be found in the State Source Water Assessment and Protection Programs Final Guidance (EPA816-R-97-009, August 1997) available at www.epa.gov/safewater/swp/swappg.html.

Q: *A PWS has exceeded the MCL of 80 ppb for total trihalomethanes (TTHMs) for calendar year 2002. What is the public notification requirement?*

A: Exceeding the MCL for TTHMs is a Tier 2 violation. Public notification for a Tier 2 violation must be issued as soon as practical but within 30 days after a violation is discovered. For any unresolved Tier 2 violation, a PWS must repeat the notice every three months or until the violation is resolved, unless the primacy agency makes a determination that circumstances warrant a different repeat frequency. This may never be less frequent than once per year (40 CFR 141.203(b)). Additional guidance, including public notice templates, is available in The Public Notification Handbook (EPA816-R-00-010, June 2000) available at www.epa.gov/safewater/pn.html.

Q: *When a public water system samples the water to test for metal contaminants, should the samples be taken before or after the water has been treated?*

A: Systems that use ground water must take a minimum of one sample at every entry point to the distribution system that is representative of each well after treatment. Systems that use surface water or a combination of surface water and ground water must take a minimum of one sample at every entry point to the distribution system after treatment or in the distribution system at a point that is representative of each source after treatment (40 CFR 141.23(a)(1) and (2)).

Q: *I have read that it is possible to treat drinking water with uranium contamination to levels at or below 20 µg/L. I have also read that EPA proposed an MCL of 20 µg/L in 1991. Why is uranium regulated at 30 µg/L and not 20 µg/L?*

A: EPA invoked discretionary authority under section 1412(b)(6) of the Safe Drinking Water Act to set an MCL for uranium at a level higher than the feasible level. Based on the relatively modest annual cancer risk reductions between 30 µg/L and 20 µg/L, the expected modest kidney toxicity risk reductions between 30 µg/L and 20 µg/L, and the high annual compliance costs for an MCL of 20 µg/L, EPA determined that the benefits did not justify the costs at the feasible level. EPA determined that an MCL of 30 µg/L maximizes the health

risk reduction benefits at a cost justified by the benefits (65 FR 76708, 76715; December 7, 2000).

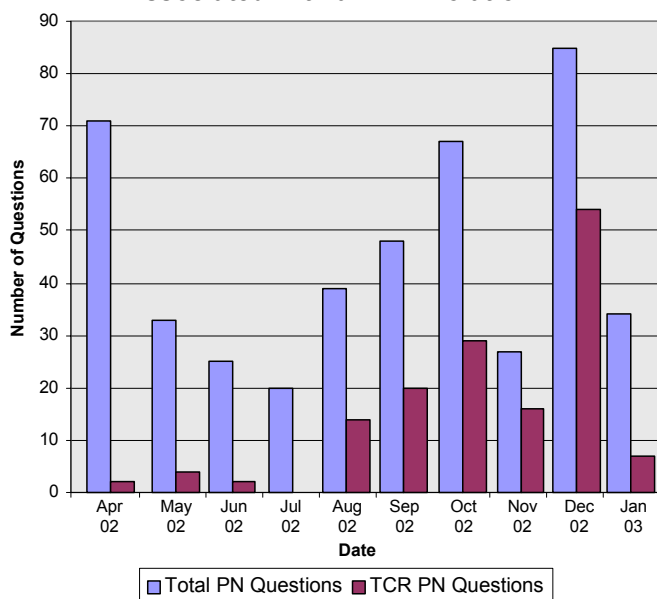
Q: What are the five constituents of the haloacetic acids (HAA5) group and what is the maximum contaminant level (MCL) and maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) for this group of constituents?

A: The five haloacetic acid constituents are monochloroacetic acid, dichloroacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, monobromoacetic acid, and dibromoacetic acid. The MCL for HAA5 is 0.060 mg/L (40 CFR 141.64). This MCL is based on the sum of the concentrations of the five constituents (63 FR 69390, 69396; December 16, 1998). There is no MCLG for HAA5 as a group; however, two of the five constituents, dichloroacetic acid and trichloroacetic acid, have individual MCLGs of zero and 0.3 mg/L, respectively (40 CFR 141.53).

Monthly Trends

In two recent Monthly Hotline Reports, the Hotline presented "monthly trends" related to public notifications regarding bacterial contamination of drinking water. In December 2002, the Monthly Hotline Report highlighted a boil water advisory and a total coliform public notice that were issued during that month in Florida. The November report illustrated a general trend of increasing Hotline calls and e-mails related to public notifications for total coliform rule (TCR) violations, the chart for which is reproduced below and updated through January 2003.

Comparison of All Public Notification Questions and Public Notification Questions Associated with a TCR Violation



In an effort to better address our callers' questions and concerns regarding the significance of coliform bacteria in drinking water, the Hotline has developed the following special series of questions and answers.

Q: What are total coliform bacteria?

A: Total coliforms are a group of closely related bacteria that are (with few exceptions) not harmful to humans. They are natural and common inhabitants of the soil and ambient waters (e.g., lakes, rivers, and estuaries), as well as the gastrointestinal tracts of animals (67 FR 19030, 19085; April 17, 2002).

Q: What does the presence of total coliform bacteria in drinking water indicate?

A: The presence of total coliform bacteria in tap water indicates possible problems in the water treatment system or in the pipes that distribute the water. Presence of particular types of total coliform bacteria, specifically, fecal coliform and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), often indicate the existence of an urgent public health problem. Fecal coliforms are a category of total coliform bacteria that are found in human and animal excretions (52 FR 42178, 42196; November 3, 1987). Generally, fecal coliform bacteria and *E. coli* are not harmful themselves, however human pathogens often co-exist with these forms of coliform bacteria (54 FR 27544, 27555; June 29, 1989).

Q: What health effects are associated with bacterial contamination in drinking water?

A: Although most coliform bacteria are harmless, the presence of any coliforms in drinking water suggests the possible presence of disease-causing bacteria, parasites, or viruses. These human pathogens can cause symptoms such as diarrhea, cramps, nausea, and vomiting, which together comprise a general condition known as gastroenteritis. Gastroenteritis is not usually serious for a healthy person, but it can lead to more serious problems in people with weakened immune systems, such as very young, elderly, or immunocompromised individuals www.epa.gov/safewater/source/therule.html#Total. Additionally, one particular strain of *E. coli* bacteria, *E. coli* O157:H7, has been known to cause severe illness in humans. Information on *E. coli* O157:H7 is available at www.epa.gov/safewater/ecoli.html.

Q: What are the public notification requirements for a violation of the EPA standard for total coliform bacteria in drinking water?

A: If a sample tests positive for coliforms, the public water system must collect a set of repeat samples within

24 hours. When a routine or repeat sample tests positive for total coliforms, it must also be analyzed for fecal coliforms or E. coli. A positive result to this secondary test signifies an acute risk to health, which necessitates state and public notification as soon as practical but no later than 24 hours after the system learns of the violation (40 CFR 141.63(b), 141.202). When more than five percent of the samples test positive for total coliforms, but negative for fecal coliforms and E. coli, the public water system must notify the public as soon as practical, but no later than 30 days after the system learns of the violation (40 CFR 141.203).

Monthly Summary of Hotline Service

Total number of calls answered	1,531
Total number of emails received	289
Average wait time (in seconds)	0:22
Percent of calls satisfied immediately	99.9%
Percent of all calls answered in < 1 min	89.9%
Percent of callbacks answered in 5 days	100%
Percent of emails answered in 5 days	100%
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about local DW quality	957
Number of times callers listened to recorded message about arsenic rule	57

Comparison to Previous Year

	Calls	Emails
January 2003	1,531	289
January 2002	1,641	367

Top Ten Referrals

Inquiry Referred to:	Number of Referrals	Percent of Total* Referrals
1. State Lab Certification	253	18
2. EPA Internet	215	15
3. Local Water System	135	9
4. State PWSS	129	9
5. NSF/WQA/UL	120	8
6. AGWT/WSC	85	6
7. Local Public Health	65	5
8. Other Hotlines	64	4
9. Non-EPA Internet	45	3
10. EPA Regions	45	3

*A total of 1,441 referrals to other resources, agencies, and organizations were provided by the Hotline in January 2003.

Customer Profiles

Customer	Calls	Emails
Analytical Laboratories	27	4
Citizen - Private Well	289	34
Citizen - PWS	763	105
Consultants/Industry/Trade (DW)	94	21
Consultants/Industry/Trade (Other)	56	21
Environmental Groups	2	8
EPA	23	4
Other Federal Agency	5	5
Government, Local	15	12
Government, State	36	7
Government, Tribal	2	1
Spanish Speaking	2	3
International	5	10
Media	3	0
Medical Professional	7	0
Public Water System	139	13
Schools/University	32	40
Other	31	1
TOTALS	1,531	289

Daily Call Data

	Total Calls Answered	Average Wait Time mm:sec
2-January	68	00:29
3-January	67	00:29
6-January	91	00:19
7-January	68	00:26
8-January	87	00:31
9-January	65	00:40
10-January	66	00:13
13-January	79	00:17
14-January	70	00:10
15-January	69	00:14
16-January	76	00:28
17-January	67	00:28
21-January	84	00:33
22-January	75	00:34
23-January	77	00:24
24-January	53	00:13
27-January	92	00:19
28-January	69	00:16
29-January	67	00:15
30-January	68	00:16
31-January	73	00:10
TOTALS	1,531	00:22

Topic Categories

Category	Calls	Emails
Microbials/Disinfection Byproducts		
Chlorine	10	4
Coliforms	41	3
Cryptosporidium	22	0
Disinfection/Disinfection Byproducts (Other)	31	3
Disinfection – Home Water	16	1
Other Microbials	8	0
Surface Water Treatment (SWTR, ESWTR, LT1FBR)	34	8
Trihalomethane (THM)	10	1
Inorganic Chemicals (IOC)/Synthetic Organic Chemicals (SOC)		
Arsenic	33	1
Fluoride	5	7
Methyl-tertiary-butyl-ether (MTBE)	4	1
Perchlorate	5	6
Phase I, II & V	37	5
Sodium Monitoring	4	0
Sulfate	6	0
Lead and Copper		
Copper	7	2
Lead	98	5
Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA)/Lead Ban	1	2
Radionuclides		
Radionuclides (Other)	16	7
Radionuclides (Radon)	56	4
Secondary DW Regulations		
Secondary DW Regulations	36	6
SDWA Background/Overview		
Definitions & Applicability	17	3
MCL List	57	7
Other Background	47	34
SDWA	20	1

Category	Calls	Emails
Water on Tap	11	4
Other DW Regulations		
Analytical Methods (DW)	25	10
Contaminant Candidate List/ Drinking Water Priority List	1	0
Consumer Confidence Report (DW)	63	12
DW Primacy (PWS)	0	0
Operator (PWS) Certification	1	3
Other Drinking Water Security	18	10
Public Notification (PWS)	32	2
Security Planning Grants	15	4
State Revolving Fund (DW)	1	1
Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR)	71	4
Other Drinking Water		
Additives Program	4	4
Bottled Water	31	6
Complaints about PWS	30	8
Compliance & Enforcement (PWS)	6	3
Home Water Treatment Units	90	16
Infrastructure/Cap. Development	5	2
Local DW Quality	225	46
Tap Water Testing	293	23
Treatment/BATs (DW)	13	8
Drinking Water Source Protection		
Ground Water Rule	1	0
Sole Source Aquifer	0	1
Source Water/Wellhead Protect.	20	12
UIC Program	9	4
Out of Purview		
Household Wells	110	16
Non-Environmental	39	16
Non-EPA Environmental	41	27
Other EPA (Programs)	79	27
TOTALS	1,855	380

SAFE DRINKING WATER HOTLINE MONTHLY REPORT

January 2003

APPENDIX A: FEDERAL REGISTER SUMMARIES

NOTICES

**“EPA Public Meeting--Closing the Gap: Innovative Responses for Sustainable Water Infrastructure; Notice of Public Meeting”
January 9, 2003 (68 FR 1182)**

EPA announced a meeting to discuss water and wastewater infrastructure in the United States. The purpose of the meeting is to bring together stakeholders, including those from business, government, and academia, to exchange information and views on management and sustainable financing of the nation's water and wastewater infrastructure. The meeting will be on January 31, 2003.

**“Public Water System Supervision Program Revision for the State of South Carolina”
January 16, 2003 (68 FR 2335)**

EPA announced that the State of South Carolina is revising its approved Public Water System Supervision (PWSS) Program. South Carolina has adopted drinking water regulations revising the public notification rule. EPA has determined that these revisions are no less stringent than the corresponding federal regulations and, therefore, has tentatively decided to approve this state program revision.

**“Public Water System Supervision Program Revision for the State of Georgia”
January 16, 2003 (68 FR 2336)**

EPA announced that the State of Georgia is revising its approved PWSS Program. Georgia has adopted drinking water regulations that incorporate the requirements of the Interim Enhanced Surface Water Treatment Rule and Stage 1 Disinfectants/Disinfection Byproducts Rule. EPA has determined that these revisions are no less stringent than the corresponding federal regulations and, therefore, intends to approve this state program revision.

**“Agency Information Collection Activities; Submission of EPA ICR No. 2092.01 to OMB for Review and Approval; Comment Request”
January 29, 2003 (68 FR 4466)**

This document announced that EPA forwarded the following Information Collection Request (ICR) entitled, “Tribal Operator Certification Program,” EPA ICR No. 2092.01, to the Office of Management and Budget for review and approval. Comments must be submitted by February 28, 2003.